



Five Town Regional Reuse Project

Reuse Event Case Study



MassDEP Municipal Waste **Reduction** Toolkit

Overview/Introduction: In FY05, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) awarded a Technical Assistance Grant to the Towns of Tewksbury, Andover, North Andover and the Cities of Lowell and Lawrence for a Regional Reuse Publicity Project. The project involved planning and implementing:

- essay and poster contests focused on reuse;
- collection events for reusable items donated to local charities to promote donations to them; and
- permanently available information about reuse opportunities in the Merrimack Valley via websites and internet.

Outreach:

- Towns held a poster contest in the schools to publicize reuse, especially to students, and to help promote the reusable items collection events planned for May.
- Publicity about the Reuse Event varied by town. There was article in the Andover paper the Thursday before the event. There was a blurb in the Northwest Weekly section of the Globe. North Andover had articles in the local paper and also in the quarterly insert "One Person's Trash". In Lawrence, the Eagle-Tribune ran a story. A press release was also provided to the Lowell Sun.
- Ongoing outreach to publicize reuse opportunities included:
 - flyers to be handed out at the reuse events and also to use for each town's website;
 - For each city/town, specific additional information was incorporated or the entire Reuse Listing page was added to the website.
 - Earth's 911 information was updated to include the organizations found during Reuse List info gathering phase;
 - The towns tentatively planned to continue these events.

Event Organization:

- Regional Reuse Days ("Zero Waste Days") were scheduled two on Saturdays in May – one in Andover and one in Tewksbury. The events were open to all residents of the Merrimack Valley.
- January: Dates and locations were established; arranged logistics with property management and got insurance coverage from Town.
- February: Organizations were identified to participate and invited for the dates selected.
- March: Volunteers were solicited (scout troops, Rotary, school environmental clubs, youth groups)
- April: Determined site layout; publicity was started in local papers and emailed flyers about event to churches, schools, garden clubs, etc. Dumpster was scheduled and permits arranged.
- May: Final press release regarding event was issued; reconfirmed participants (organizations and volunteers), details of the day outlined, made signs, prepared for rain dates and then sent a press release on the results to the local papers.
- Locations
 - The Andover location was in the parking lot of an office complex so it was privately owned. As a result, the Town of Andover liability insurance coverage was requested, requested permits for the dumpsters and signage (fees waived), and coordinated with the property managers. The Tewksbury location was a municipal parking lot behind the Recreation Department building, which has been used in the past for a town-wide yard sale. There is parking available for sports fields nearby and there are two 10-CY dumpsters already on-site. Coordination was with the Recreation Director, who had access to tables, trucks, and a few staff.
- Organizations invited
 - The goal was to increase awareness of local charities willing to accept reusable items. After researching, we identified several that were invited to participate. Some had trucks available but others didn't. For the ones that did not have access to trucks, we were able to arrange to borrow personal vehicles or other trucks to accept donations. Individuals from most of the organizations

were available to be on-site during the collection to determine if donations were acceptable. See the publicity flyer for specifics on items accepted. The organizations invited included:

- Lazarus House (a local social service organization with thrift shops and more),
 - Saint Vincent de Paul (collects clothing nationally),
 - Community Book Solutions (local book reuse and redistribution organization),
 - Bikes Not Bombs (based in Boston),
 - Building Materials Resource Center (based in Boston),
 - Nike (accepts sneakers for reuse into tracks, fields, ballcourt surfaces)
 - two local animal shelters (MSPCA and Lowell Humane Society), and
 - Project Wish of Lowell, a local organization that helps provide household and children's items to those starting over.
- **Planning: site layout, permits, insurance, dumpsters**
For the Andover site, we arranged to have two 20-CY roll offs delivered the Friday before the collection event. We only needed a small portion of one roll-off so Tewksbury decided to rely just on its two 10-CY dumpsters. In Andover, we needed dumpster and sign permits which were granted the week before by the Town officials at no charge.
 - **Volunteers**
For the Andover event, volunteers came from the Recycling Committees of Andover and North Andover and from the Rotary Clubs in each town, plus the Andover High school and Phillips Academy (private school) environmental clubs and from two churches in the area with active social justice programs. In Andover, there were 40-50 different individual volunteers many of whom spent the entire 3+ hours there. All volunteers were asked to arrive by 8AM, if they were planning to be there for the start. The trucks and traffic lanes were already in position by 8AM so we could review the plan for traffic and unloading.

The plan was to have volunteers unloading cars and putting items onto one of three tables. From the tables, other volunteers were to sort and take items to the correct truck. In actuality, things ran differently. The tables were wet and items would have gotten soggy if left for any time on the tables. Because of the heavy rain, the large number of volunteers and the slow but steady pace of cars, we just had numerous people taking the items out of residents cars, asking what it was, and taking it directly to the right truck. Representatives from the organizations were inside each truck to pass judgment on what they could accept. We were unloading up to three cars at a time.

Results:

- More than 500 school-age children participated in poster and essay contests across the five communities. Cable TV programs showed the poster entries and winning essays in Andover and North Andover.
- Tewksbury and Andover hosted two collection events that were open to all residents of the region and publicized in local papers as well as the Eagle Tribune and the Lowell Sun.
- 225 residents participated in the two collection events.
- Nine charitable organizations received donations at the collection events.
- More than 50 volunteers helped at each of the two collection events from Rotary, churches, and schools.
- The Andover event was held despite bad weather (a northeaster with 50 degree temperatures, rain, and wind). There were 150 cars that came through and they were all quite full. A few came through more than once. We had 40-50 volunteers throughout the morning, many of whom stayed for the entire time. We collected:
 - 25-30 bikes and a nice jogger,
 - about 50 cartons of books,
 - five van-loads of children's items for shelters,
 - 10 bags of sneakers,
 - a dozen bags of linens for the animal shelter, and
 - enough bags of clothes and household items, small appliances, and toys for Lazarus House and St. Vincent de Paul to partially fill their trucks.
 - The Building Materials Resource Center went home with several good solid wood doors, shutters, windows, insulation, and a few toys.

The Tewksbury event had about 75 participants but their cars were quite full. The weather was considerably better. Originally, there had been a town-wide yard sale planned for the same day in an adjacent area but that was cancelled to ensure that there would be space for the

ZWD. In hindsight, the two events probably would have complemented each other well. Results from the Tewksbury event included:

- 8 bikes;
- three-quarters of a van full of books;
- one-third of the truck for BMRC, including doors, sinks, ceiling fans, storm doors);
- one-third of the large trucks brought by Lazarus House and Saint Vincent de Paul;
- 2 large bags of sneakers;
- half of the box truck and van brought by Project Wish; and
- a small number of linens for the Humane Society.

At both events, the primary source of participants was from the host community. In Andover, residents arrived early (as expected based on HHW programs' experience). In Tewksbury, residents didn't start arriving until later. In both cases, most of the waste was toys and stuffed animals and sporting equipment.